

2022 TRTF Classroom Assistance Grant Winners

Nathan Melson is a STEAM and robotics teacher at Dodd City High School. Melson will purchase VEXIQ equipment to develop an after-school robotics program for the middle school and prepare two competitive teams for the VEX VRC competition. This will give younger students early exposure to the VEX Robotics Ecosystem and help them prepare for high school coursework in this growing field.

Sara Hansen is a Health Science teacher at Atascocita High School in Humble. Her students, who are planning to work in the medical field, have been unable to observe and shadow workers at local medical facilities due to COVID-19 restrictions. With her grant, she will purchase heart and brain dissection kits to give her students the opportunity for hands-on learning they cannot currently receive through live clinical rotations.

Brandy Rood works at Humble High School as a Theatre Arts teacher. With her Emergency Assessment Certification Project, theater and health science students will collaborate in a competition to practice their skillsets in saving lives and designing and applying stage makeup. The funds will help purchase stage makeup, prosthetics, and trauma dressings.

Ashley Vernon works at the Belton Early Childhood School as a special education teacher for pre-school aged children. The funds will go towards buying educational games, activities, and materials for learning centers that offer students opportunities to count, match and sort colors and shapes, and develop foundational math and oral language skills.

Samantha Keaton is a Social Studies and Student Leadership educator at Young Women's Leadership Academy in Fort Worth. Her students create literacy themed chairs based on children's books, then deliver the chairs to a local elementary campus. The funds will go towards tools, sandpaper, and paint so her students may repair and decorate the donated chairs.

Allory Plamondon is a teacher at Will Davis Elementary in Austin. With her grant, she will purchase instructional materials, decodable texts, and multisensory tools for reading instruction and high-quality, engaging, and culturally relevant texts that her third-grade students can feel confident in reading independently.

Jacklyn DeLaGarza teaches fourth grade at Palmer-Laakso Elementary in San Benito. With her grant, she will create an outdoor learning garden by purchasing wooden picnic tables, outdoor blankets, wind chimes, solar lighting, and native plants. Students will explore scientific concepts and learn about migrating birds and butterflies while also engaging in reading practice.

Keleia Thompson teaches Reading to kindergarten through third grade students at Carroll Peak Elementary in Fort Worth. Her "Read Like a Boss" project helps students learn to read on grade level, increase reading speed, and build vocabulary and fluency. She will purchase a Reader's Theater Script box, scripts, and puppets to bring classic stories to life, as well as rewards for students who meet their reading goals.

Jessica Marquez is a Pre-K teacher at Timbers Elementary in Humble. She will purchase age-appropriate yet challenging STEM materials, such as the House Building Kit, the Design and Build Engineering Kit, Fairy Tales STEAM Kit, Stack & Create Builders Kit, and more. This project-based learning endeavor will encourage open-ended experiences and introduce students to STEM concepts at an early age.

Joan Batts teaches art at B.F. Terry High School in Rosenberg. With her funds, she will purchase a sewing machine, as well as thread, fabric, and scissors so that her students can learn to sew a doll, animal, or creature. Her students will learn techniques such as trapunto, applique, zig zag stitching, and sewing seams.

Marshall Harrell teaches Music at A.V. Cato Elementary in Fort Worth for pre-K through 5th grade students. With the funds from TRTF, he will purchase a quality bass xylophone and mallets to help his students learn to understand music pitches, the bass clef, scales, tones, colors, and the relationship to sound by size and vibration. This will be his students' first experience with pitched instruments.

Nathaniel Collins is the Band teacher for 6th through 12th grade students at Naaman Forest High School in Garland. He will expand the band's percussion inventory in anticipation of a 100-150 percent growth in student participation in the program. He will add cymbal and bongo stands, jam blocks, twist shakers, drumsticks, and more to the school's shared collection.

Yeseul Lewis teaches kindergarten through 5th grade STEM at McDermott Elementary in San Antonio. As it is the program's first year, Lewis will purchase tools and materials to teach Engineering Design Process concepts. These items include Jasonwell Building Blocks, Big Bolt Construction sets, junior tool sets, Design and Drill Marble Mazes, and glue guns.

Jessica Perry wants to close the learning gap between her virtual and classroom students at Honey Grove High School. She will purchase an Epson DC-21 document camera, allowing her to record lessons as well as provide voice-over notes for students learning from home or who have been absent from class.

Sandra Campos will teach her special education students at Palm Grove Elementary in Brownsville to use math manipulatives and games to learn math algorithms. Using items such as Wood Number Board Activities, Fidget My Problem, Design Your Space, Design an Analysis Chart, Monopoly, and the Game of Life board game, she will help her students learn to solve math problems in engaging, creative ways.

Erika Chairez will operate her Animal Rescue Crew project at Rowlett High School. Her students will learn about appropriate diets for carnivores, herbivores and omnivores, as well as cross-contamination protocols and animal behavior. She will use the funds from TRTF to buy fresh foods such as collard greens, apples, bananas, squash, and grapes and also food items such as insects and pellets.

Karen Conner teaches STEM at Charles L. Kuentz, Jr. Elementary in Helotes. She will purchase an 800-piece set of Keva Planks, which are thin wooden building blocks that students use to create structures, contraptions, and sculptures. Combined with challenge cards, a logical spatial reasoning game, as well as a "contraption" extension set, students will build STEM fluency skills in collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

LaShel Rowton is a Physical Education teacher at Walt Disney Elementary in Alvin. She will incorporate non-toxic powdered color and foam into her students' favorite activity, running. This will help spark enthusiasm to exercise and combat obesity and will be included in the school's annual running events, such as Wildcat Water Day, Pumpkin Run, Turkey Trot, Go Run for Fun, and Reindeer Run.

Melissa Floyd teaches first grade at Clearfork Elementary School in Andrews. Her students need guided books in their hands for fluency, reading practice, and comprehension work at reading levels A to K.

Some of the titles she will purchase include Jasper the Cat, Clarence the Dragon, Pickles the Dog, Georgie Giraffe, and Galaxy Girl.

Rachal Brewster teaches Chemistry at Lakeview High School in San Angelo. She will incorporate spectral analysis tools into her lessons to help her students understand concentration of solution and reactivity rates through the use of visible light analysis. She will purchase colorimeters, cuvettes, and a Spectro Vis Plus Probe.

Rochelle Purnell and co-applicant Rhonda Smith will create their GLOW to GROW project at Humble Middle School. The project consists of 40 science experiments, including the effects of an oil spill, grow geodes, launch rockets, grow a carbon sugar snake, engineer a cell phone stand, build a model heart pump, dissect owl pellets, and much more! The educators will purchase a variety of kits to get the program started.

Brooke Phillips teaches Life Skills at Midland High School. Her special needs students will grow tomatoes as part of the campus beautification project, learning about the vegetable's growth cycle from seed to harvest. The students will also be able to incorporate the tomatoes in their cooking lessons. With her grant, Brooke will purchase grow lights, peat pellets, soil, seeds, jungle towers, and hanging baskets.

Corrine Thompson is a Gifted and Talented teacher at Mildred Junior High in Corsicana. With her funds, she will invite Jiann Powers—a professional storyteller experienced with youth—to conduct a workshop on the art of oral tradition with her students. As a result, her students will create a portfolio of stories to share with audiences.

Connie Cox teaches 5th grade science at Wolfe City Elementary. She will teach her students to grow raised vegetable gardens. Students will work with the community garden committee to help raise produce for families during the summer. To build the gardens, Ms. Cox will purchase concrete, cinder blocks, and soil. The local Lowe's has agreed to help the school with delivery and construction.

Erica Rutledge teaches Integrated Athletics, a program that creates an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate on a competitive sports team within Humble ISD. She wants to use music to help motivate her students at Summer Creek High School. She will purchase a JBL Party Box 300 mobile speaker and accessories to encourage participation, increase energy, and soothe her students.

Shawn Reeves will create a living, real-time experience of observing life cycle stages of butterflies and other insects for Pre-K students at T.G. Givens Early Childhood Center in Paris. To establish the "Pollinator Garden" project, Reeves will purchase soil conditioners, 30-plus live plants, signage, magnifying glasses, and student journals.

Brenda Gawlik teaches special education Pre-K and kindergarten students at Hampton Moreno Dugat Early Childhood Center in Beeville. She will create an iPad station using two iPads, which will enable her to offer differentiated instruction for early learners and strengthen their literacy, communication, and fine motor skills.

Savetria Francis teaches at the Benjamin Davis Ninth Grade Center in Houston. Her project, "Bloom Where You Are Planted," will help students survey and identify methods of reproduction, growth, and development of various types of plants. She will buy an AeroGarden System and Grow Anything Seed

Pod Kit. Students will maintain their findings in a scientific log as they follow and measure the growth of plants from seed to maturity.

Erica Ramirez will purchase multiple novel sets in Spanish for her fourth and fifth grade students at Beaver Technology Center in Garland. Students will create one-pagers, videos, and other media to demonstrate their impressions of the books, while deepening their comprehension of increasingly complex texts.

Cecilia Montalvo is an English teacher at Lopez Early College High School in Brownsville. Her students will process an overall art composition, then break it down into separate painting steps. All team members will interlock their painted jigsaw pieces together to complete the design. With the funds provided by TRTF, Ms. Montalvo will purchase wood shapes, acrylic paint, easels, and various stencils.